

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5**

DATE: September 15, 2000

SUBJECT: Reports of Significant Developments and Activities
Ending on September 8, 2000

FROM: William E. Muno, Director
Superfund Division

TO: Francis X. Lyons
Regional Administrator

David A. Ullrich
Deputy Regional Administrator

The activities listed below are organized by site-specific activities, other significant developments, international activities, and training/conferences:

SITE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

Ongoing Response, Nicor Residential Mercury Releases, Chicago Metro Area, Illinois

Nicor Gas (Nicor) continues to screen potentially contaminated homes within their service area and is performing decontamination of those homes found to be contaminated. Nicor intends to screen homes within their service area that have, or have had over the course of several decades, a mercury gas regulator within the home. To date, of about 1,700 screened homes, 75 require decontamination. Approximately 27 homes have been decontaminated and approved by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for re-occupancy. U.S. EPA continues to monitor residential cleanup activities.

U.S. EPA, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA), and State of Illinois, Office of the Attorney General, required Nicor to investigate Nicor service centers where regulators were taken after removal from residences and scrap yards where the regulators were taken after processing. On September 2, 2000, U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA began joint

inspections, and have found that four scrap yards and seven Nicor service centers require cleanup. On September 5, 2000, Illinois State and County prosecutors filed a five count lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court against Nicor and two subcontractors to compel Nicor to develop a cleanup plan and perform a timely and effective cleanup of those residential, commercial, and industrial settings found to be contaminated with mercury. On September 6, 2000, U.S. EPA issued a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act Unilateral Administrative Order to Nicor for the immediate cleanup of all scrap yards, Nicor service centers, and any other industrial facilities found to be contaminated.

Contacts: Brad Stimple (312-886-0406)
 Louise Fabinski (312-886-7476)
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PRP Removal Action Completed, Ohio Drum Site, Cleveland, Ohio

On September 7, 2000, the potential responsible party (PRP) group completed the removal of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination from the swamp property. This was the third time in 2 years they had to return to the site to continue the removal action. It is estimated that this last phase removed approximately 600 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated material. The industrial portion of this site was completed last year as a fund-lead site.

Contact: Joe Fredle (440-250-1740)

Emergency Response (Mercury Spill), Lapeer County Health Department, Lapeer, Michigan

On August 28, 2000, On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Michelle Jaster responded to a request for assistance at the Lapeer County Health Department in Lapeer, Michigan. A blood pressure gauge in an exam room at the County Health Clinic had released elemental mercury to the floor. The exact cause of the spill was never determined. Lapeer County personnel had attempted a cleanup, but had called the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) when their efforts did not address the problem fully. MDCH referred the County to U.S. EPA for assistance.

U.S. EPA and the Superfund Technical Assistance & Response Team (START) contractors determined through air monitoring

that only the exam room was impacted by the spill; oversaw the decontamination activities undertaken by the County's spill response contractor; continued to provide real-time air monitoring services throughout the decontamination; screened an outdoor area that had been potentially impacted by the County's decontamination efforts and verified that there were no mercury levels above background in the soils; and, arranged for air samples to be collected and analyzed for mercury vapor after decontamination activities were complete. The samples were analyzed by the Environmental Response Team (ERT), and on August 31, 2000, were found to be less than the cleanup criteria. The County resumed normal full-scale operations at the facility on September 1, 2000.

Contact: Michelle Jaster (734-692-7683)

Five-Year Review Report Completed, Wausau Groundwater Contamination Superfund Site, Wausau, Wisconsin

A five-year review report was completed and signed in July 2000 for the Wausau Groundwater Contamination Superfund site in Wausau, Wisconsin. The report was based on a site inspection which was completed during June, and confirmed that the remedy remains protective of both human health and the environment.

The Wausau site remedial action is being implemented under 1988 and 1989 Record of Decisions, and two corresponding potentially responsible party lead consent decrees. A groundwater pump & treatment system currently operates at an average rate of about 800 gallons per minute, and two city municipal wells receive air stripping treatment. A soil vapor extraction system operates at an identified source area at the site.

Contact: Jeff Gore (312-886-6552)

Community Involvement Efforts (Vermiculite), Western Minerals Products Plant, Minneapolis, Minnesota

On September 11, 2000, four Community Involvement Coordinators (CIC) traveled to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to conduct community interviews and discuss access agreements with residents around the Western Minerals Products Plant on 17 and Madison Streets where vermiculite insulation was produced. The Western

Minerals Company piled vermiculite rock on their property and offered the free rock to anyone who wanted to use it, resulting in contamination of residential yards.

To gain access for sampling and cleanup, there will later be four teams covering 150 homes over a three to four day period. Each team will consist of a CIC (Stuart Hill, Cheryl Allen, Jennifer Ostermeier, and Leo Rosales) and a technical person (Mark Johnson, and a contractor). Representatives from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the County Health Department will be part of the teams. Health related issues will be referred to Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). Len Zentak (On-Scene Coordinator) and Stuart Hill (CIC) are the key people for this cleanup.

The number of homes to be addressed may ultimately increase because there are two additional facilities in the area that have also distributed vermiculite.

Contacts: Len Zentak (312-886-4246)
Stuart Hill (312-886-0689)

Phase 1 Field Investigation Completed, Rockwell International Corp. (Allegan Plant) Superfund Site, Allegan, Michigan

During the week of September 11, 2000, the Phase 1 field investigation was completed at the Rockwell International Corp. (Allegan Plant) Superfund site. Tetra-Tech, U.S. EPA's contractor, is conducting the investigation to collect the additional data needed to complete the potentially responsible party's remedial investigation and feasibility study. During Phase 1 approximately 15 surface water and 30 sediment samples were collected from the Kalamazoo River and former wastewater treatment ponds, 6 semipermeable membrane devices were installed along the Kalamazoo riverbank near former outfalls and potential groundwater discharge areas, 75 screening soil samples were collected and analyzed for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) at an onsite mobile laboratory, 45 soil samples were collected and sent to an off-site laboratory for full analysis, 30 screening groundwater samples were collected from temporary well points and analyzed for PCBs, PAHs, mercury, and 22 shallow, intermediate and deep groundwater monitoring wells were installed.

The investigation included soil and groundwater sampling beneath an old manufacturing building and confirmed contamination along a suspected outfall from a former oil floatation house to the Kalamazoo River. The Phase 2 field work will begin in October and will include groundwater sampling, slug tests, and possibly an aquifer pump test.

Contact: Karen Cibulskis (312-886-1843)

Facility Tour, Cenex Harvest States Cooperative (Honeymead), Mankato, Minnesota

On August 30, 2000, On-Scene Coordinator Karen Vendl and Office of Regional Counsel Attorney Peter Felitti toured the Cenex Harvest States Cooperative (formerly known as Honeymead Products Company) in Mankato, Minnesota. This facility is a soybean processing plant and vegetable oil refinery that had a discharge of soybean oil into the Blue Earth River in 1997. Because this facility stores more than a million gallons of oil, it is subject to the Facility Response Plan requirements of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The tour occurred as part of U.S. EPA's response to the company's failure to submit an approvable Facility Response Plan.

Contact: Karen Vendl (312-886-7194)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act Compliance Inspections (Sector Initiative), Cleveland, Ohio

On September 6-7, 2000, George Rancich and William Sandstrom, Office of Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention (OCEPP), conducted three Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) Compliance Inspections in Ohio. The facilities inspected were among those which had not responded to a compliance assistance mailing made by U.S. EPA on behalf of the Ohio State Emergency Response Commission. These mailings were part of a joint six State/U.S. EPA Sector Initiative involving Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) Codes 3471 (plating and polishing) and 3479 (metal coating and coloring).

The facilities inspected were Phoenix Industrial Finishing,

PRO.TEC, Inc., and Aeroplating, Inc., all in Cleveland, Ohio. A member of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Right-to-Know Office accompanied the OCEPP inspectors and participated in the inspections. The results of the inspections will be documented in reports to the appropriate OCEPP enforcement personnel for review and follow-up action, as needed.

Contacts: George Rancich (312-886-6148)
Bill Sandstrom (312-886-6028)

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Briefing (Dioxin), Government of Hong Kong Officials, Chicago, Illinois

On September 12, 2000, Anthony Holoska of the Field Services Section (FSS) briefed Lily Yam, Secretary for the Environment and Food, and Annie Choi, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food, in the U.S. EPA Region 5 offices in Chicago, Illinois, at the request of the Region 5 Office of International Affairs. In particular, Ms. Yam and Ms. Choi wanted to know about the U.S. EPA's history of cleaning up dioxin sites. They indicated that dioxin concerns in Hong Kong are very strong and have an adverse effect on the construction of an incinerator. Mr. Holoska provided them with a historical overview of dioxin and also a technical overview on how it can be removed from the environment or destructed in a special incinerator. Ms Amy Mucha of the Office of Strategic Environmental Analysis was able to provide them with toxicological information from the Dioxin 2000 conference that she recently attended.

Contact: Anthony Holoska (312-886-7503)

TRAINING/CONFERENCES

Meeting and Responding to Spills Training, Quad Cities Sub-Area Planning, Bettendorf, Iowa

On September 7, 2000, the Quad Cities Sub-Area Planning Committee sponsored the Responding to Spills on the Mississippi River Training course in Bettendorf, Iowa.

Material was presented by the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, U.S. EPA Region 5, U.S. EPA Region 7, Davenport Fire Department, Bettendorf Fire Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The training focused on providing attendees information on the existing plans for the Quad Cities area, sources of possible spill releases on the Mississippi River, and resources and techniques for a spill response on the Mississippi River. On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Steve Faryan provided a presentation on response tactics, such as using the lock and dam systems or barges for containing a spill of oil in the Mississippi River. Ann Whelan, Oil Pollution Act (OPA) Planner for U.S. EPA, provided information on the inland waterway response atlas developed for the Mississippi River Pools 10-15. Over seventy representatives from local, State, and Federal agencies and industry attended the training.

Contacts: Barbi Lee (312-886-5296)
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Meeting, Regional Tribal Operation Committee, Oneida Indian Reservation, Green Bay, Wisconsin

On September 6, 2000, Glenn Cekus, Office of Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention, attended the Regional Tribal Operation Committee quarterly meeting as the Superfund Division representative. A number of agenda topics dealing with sovereignty, funding of tribal environmental programs, and new initiatives were covered. The upcoming selection of a director of the Region 5 Indian Environmental Office (IEO) and subsequent reorganization of the IEO, potential issuance of inspector credentials to tribal members, the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) treaty regulating twelve persistent chemicals, and an update on Federal Core Water Quality Standards, were some of the more prominent items covered. A discussion regarding boundary determination for Clean Air Act Amendment ozone level non-attainment areas revealed that three of the thirty-four Reservations located in Region 5 may lie wholly or partly within these zones.

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